

Message Text

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64

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

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FM AMCONSUL WINNIPEG

TO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1759

UNCLAS WINNIPEG 0489

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: QUEBEC ELECTION: REACTION IN MANITOBA

REF: WINNIPEG 479

1. QUEBEC ELECTION RESULTS CONTINUE TO RECEIVE EXTENSIVE WIRE-SERVICE COVERAGE IN MANITOBA MEDIA, BUT THERE HAS NOT BEEN MUCH LOCAL COMMENTARY. WINNIPEG TRIBUNE CONDUCTED TELEPHONE OPINION POLL NOVEMBER 16 AMONG ITS SUBSCRIBERS WHO WERE ASKED 'DO YOU THINK IT IS IMPORTANT FOR QUEBEC TO REMAIN A PART OF CANADA.' FROM A TOTAL OF 733 CALLS, 391 (53 PER CENT) REPLIED YES AND 342 (47 PER CENT) INDICATED NO.
2. FREE PRESS HAD INTERESTING EDITORIAL COMMENTARY ABOUT CONCERNS OF MANITOBA'S FRENCH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY. JUDGMENT WAS THAT THIER CONCERN IS MUCH LARGER, REAL OR IMAGINED, THAN AMONG PROVINCE'S ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY.
3. FRENCH-SPEAKING MANITOBANS ARE SAID TO BE LEFT WITH 'A FEELING OF DISMAY AND PENDING DISASTER,' SINCE DEPARTURE OF QUEBEC FROM CONFEDERATION WOULD ELIMINATE 'ALMOST EVERYTHING THAT ALLOWS THEM TO RETAIN THEIR PRESENT IMAGE.' ALTHOUGH THEY NUMBER MORE THAN 85,000 IN MANITOBA, WITHOUT QUEBEC, 'FRANCO-MANITOBANS COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED A MINORITY LARGE ENOUGH TO WARRANT CONTINUATION OF ANY KIND OF BILINGUAL PROGRAMS IN THIS PROVINCE.'

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4. THEIR GREATEST CONCERN THOUGH IS 'THE ATTITUDE OF MR. LEVESQUE

TOWARD THEM. IF QUEBEC SEPARATES, THEY SAY, WE WOULD BECOME DEAD
DUCKS RENE LEVESQUE HAS ALWAYS SAID WE WERE.' THEY ALSO EXPRESS
WORRY THAT MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE PQ, THAT OF SEPARATION FROM CANADA,
WILL NOT BE DECIDED BY ECONOMICS OR ON A LOGICAL PLANE, BUT THAT
'IT WILL BECOME AN EMOTIONAL ISSUE, ONE WHICH MAY BE DECIDED WRONGLY
FOR ALL THE WRONG REASONS.'

5. COMMENT: AS THE EXCITEMENT OF THE IMMEDIATE POST-ELECTION
PERIOD SUBSIDES, WE FIND MANITOBANS LESS ANXIOUS TO SEE QUEBEC GO
ITS OWN WAY. AND WITH A POSSIBLE QUEBEC REFERENDUM ON SEPARATION
STILL IN THE RELATIVELY DISTANT FUTURE, THERE APPEARS TO BE A
QUIET HOPE THAT THINGS WILL SORT THEMSELVES OUT. IN ANY CASE THERE
HAVE BEEN FEW HINTS HERE ABOUT WHAT MANITOBANS CAN OR SHOULD DO
TO ALTER THE COURSE OF EVENTS.
HUTSON

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